

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 8, 2011 (first day of two-day Commission meeting)

Agenda Item: Elk Archery Working Group Proposal

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Informational (may be acted upon December 9)

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 minutes

◆ ----- ◆

Background: In February 2008, the FWP Commission adopted new elk archery permit regulations in seven hunting districts (HDs) in the Missouri River Breaks (HDs 410, 417, 620, 621, 622, 700 and 701) and 23 hunting districts outside the Breaks (HDs 401, 403, 411, 412, 420, 426, 441, 447, 450, 455, 500, 502, 510, 511, 520, 530, 570, 575, 580, 590, 702, 704 and 705). All 30 HDs were grouped into 11 groups or “bundles” made up of one to five HDs (410/417, 620/621/622, 700/701, 401/403/441/450, 411/412/426/511/530, 420/447/455, 500/570, 502/510/520/575, 580, 590, 702/704/705). During the 2010-2011 season setting process, this permit structure was maintained except in one hunting district outside the Breaks (HD 441) and with some adjustments to permits levels and/or the biennial permit ranges.

In response to the contentious debate on this topic, FWP staff proposed a facilitated working group in June 2011. A call for nominations was made with ten private citizens of Montana ultimately sitting on this “Elk Archery Working Group”. These individuals represented a diversity of experience across Montana’s geography and included landowners, public sporting interests and commercial/fee hunting perspectives. The working group members are Henry Bedford - Roundup, Jack Billingsley - Glasgow, Ed Bukoskey – Rosebud, Ray Gross – Dillon, Art Hayes – Birney, Bill McKinley – Conrad, Rick Miller – Colstrip, Terry Stiles – Malta, Jason Tounsley – Billings and Doug Krings – Lewistown. Dr. Mike Mitchell of the University of Montana Wildlife Co-op Unit was the facilitator. Several FWP staff members assisted with facilitation/logistics and technical inputs. Dr. Mitchell and FWP staff members were not part of the working group’s consensus decisions. Staff members of the US Fish and Wildlife Service from the CMR Wildlife Refuge attended some meetings as did various members of the public.

Using a Structured Decision Making (SDM) process, the working group developed a problem statement, fundamental objectives and assessed the performance of multiple season options relative to the fundamental objectives. These written products are available on the FWP website. The working group process and resulting recommendation will be presented to the FWP Commission at its December 8, 2011 meeting in Helena. While this presentation will be information only, the Commission may act upon the working group’s recommendation the next day on December 9 when it takes up the 2012 – 2013 elk hunting seasons.